

## **Education Committee Public Hearing – March 4, 2022**

Testimony Submitted by Cary Lynch, Climate and Policy Manager, The Nature Conservancy

### **H.B. 5285 AN ACT CONCERNING THE PUBLIC SCHOOL CURRICULUM**

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony on behalf of The Nature Conservancy in **support of H.B. No. 5285**. The Nature Conservancy is committed to elevating policies that promote equitable climate change education.

This bill requires that all school districts provide climate change instruction as part of the science curriculum. Global climate change and its impacts on people and resources pose serious societal challenges. The actions we take today will influence future greenhouse gas emissions and the magnitude of warming; they will also affect our ability to respond and adapt to changes, and to reduce the vulnerability of people and places to harm. Educating future generations about the causes and effects of global climate change is imperative since implementing solutions depends on an informed public, for both societal and individual level actions.

The Nature Conservancy supports equal access to science-based climate and energy education in our schools<sup>1</sup>. Lack of science, energy, and climate change education leaves our children unable to understand the interconnections between our actions and the disastrous climatic outcomes<sup>2</sup>. Our youth should also be prepared for job opportunities and learn the importance of resilience planning.

Overall, Connecticut received a “B+” in a national study<sup>3</sup> of how state public school science standards address climate change, but it is not evident from this study that these standards are being taught across the state and to what degree they are being taught. We would recommend that climate change education curriculum be put into statute to help ensure that educators have access to relevant materials and that our children are better prepared to face a uncertain future where climate change impacts multiple aspects of their lives.

We believe that climate change education is important for all children especially those in underrepresented communities. The results are lack of opportunities and lack of information on climate, energy, and environmental justice and health connections to climate and energy which leave communities unable to advocate or connect with opportunities. To help close the opportunity gap, further environmental justice, and protect the environment we need to advocate for educating all children in grades three to twelve about the science of climate change; the role humans play in accelerating climate change; ways to increase climate resilience; and ways to lower our carbon emissions related to energy production and use. By doing so we can provide equal access to climate change information so as to equip all students, regardless of school district, with the tools necessary to be part of a green economy.

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony in support of HB 5285.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.nature.org/en-us/about-us/who-we-are/how-we-work/youth-engagement/nature-lab/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.un.org/en/climatechange/climate-solutions/education-key-addressing-climate-change>

<sup>3</sup> [https://ncse.ngo/files/MakingTheGrade\\_Final\\_10.8.2020.pdf](https://ncse.ngo/files/MakingTheGrade_Final_10.8.2020.pdf)